

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 9, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C., 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We observed with great interest your recent visit to Brazil for the inauguration of President Jair Bolsonaro, who, in his first days in office, has taken a series of actions that target marginalized groups, particularly LGBT, indigenous, and Afro-Brazilian populations. It's become immediately clear that President Bolsonaro's worrisome past statements on human rights are no longer confined to rhetoric.

We were, therefore, puzzled that, following your meeting with President Bolsonaro, a State Department readout explained that you "reaffirmed the strong U.S.-Brazil partnership, rooted in our shared commitment to democracy, education, prosperity, security and human rights." It's unclear that President Bolsonaro shares those values. If the Trump Administration is indeed committed to this partnership, we strongly suggest that you not gloss over Mr. Bolsonaro's behavior, but both privately and publicly raise objections to these recent actions.

In 2013, President Bolsonaro stated that he was "proud to be homophobic," and would "rather have a son who is an addict than a son who is gay." Two years earlier, he said he would "rather his son die in a car accident than be gay." Unfortunately, President Bolsonaro's antagonism towards the LGBT community was on full display in his first hours in office when he excluded LGBT individuals from those groups which would be protected by a new Ministry of Human Rights.

President Bolsonaro's transfer of responsibilities delineating indigenous territories and lands set aside for descendants of former slaves from the Justice Ministry to the Agriculture Ministry—largely controlled by those connected to the country's agrobusiness industry—is also extremely worrisome. As the Associated Press wrote, this decision "likely will make it all but impossible for new lands to be identified and demarcated for indigenous communities."

We appreciate the importance of working with partners in the Americas such as Brazil to promote human rights and democracy in Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba. At the same time, it is essential that the United States continue to stand for the universal nature of human rights by speaking out when the rights of any marginalized group are jeopardized.

We urge you to stand with the people of Brazil and the Americas and stay true to your stated commitment on human rights in Brazil by opposing President Bolsonaro's recent actions.

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Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

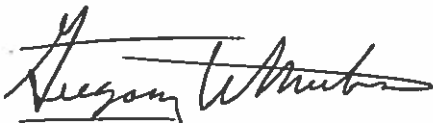
Sincerely,



Eliot L. Engel
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee



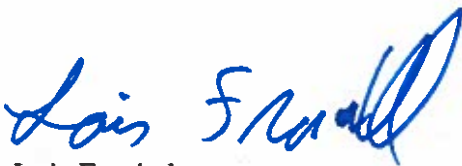
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